

YELLOWSTONE RIVER CONSERVATION DISTRICT COUNCIL

CONSERVATION DISTRICT MEMBERS: Carbon, Custer, Dawson, Park, Prairie, Richland, Rosebud, Stillwater, Sweet Grass, Treasure, Yellowstone, McKenzie County North Dakota, RAC Chairman

Meeting Minutes -- November 16, 2006

Fort Keogh Meeting Room at Miles City, Montana

Members Present: Paul Gilbert, Sweet Grass CD; Tony Barone, Richland CD; Kenny Nemitz, Dawson CD; Don Youngbauer, Rosebud CD; Phil Fox, Treasure CD; Bob Hector, Yellowstone CD; Dave Schwarz, Prairie CD; Luther Waterland, MACD; John Moorhouse, RAC Chairman and Orvin Finsaas, McKenzie ND, CD.

Others Present: Greg Johnson and Roger Kay, COE; Warren Kellogg, NRCS/TAC; Jim Robinson, DNRC; Gay Easton, Yellowstone CD; Laurie Zeller, DNRC; David Pratt, NRCS; Mack Cole, RAC; Laurie Kelley, Rosebud CD; Laverne Ivie, Yellowstone CD; and Carol Watts, Custer CD Administrator, Nicole McClain, Park CD.

Chairman Don Youngbauer called the meeting to order at 10:08 am on Thursday, November 16, 2006. Rod Heitschmidt was introduced as the LARRL Research Leader at Fort Keogh. Heitschmidt showed a power point presentation and spoke of the role that the station plays in livestock and range research. A tour of the remodeling at the Fort was given by Matt Rinella, LARRL Rangeland Scientist with a special presentation of the green house given by Jennifer Mauscha, LARRL Rangeland Scientist, III.

Introductions were made; Nicole McClain who is currently the Upper Yellowstone River Watershed Coordinator was introduced as the new coordinator for the YRCDC. She will assume her position in January 2007. The Council welcomed Nicole McClain.

Search Committee Report: Bob Hector reported on the interview with Nicole McClain because Walter Rolf was unable to attend the meeting. Hector reported that the committee met with McClain on November 3, 2006 and they were very impressed with her qualifications. Nicole McClain was later offered the job which she accepted. Details concerning employment are still being negotiated.

TAC Update: see Warren's notes for the TAC comments. Warren yielded the floor to Greg Johnson who gave a report on the Army Corp of Engineers' (ACOE) budget for the Yellowstone River CES saying there was no federal budget for 2007 yet. It is not known how Conrad Burn's loss in the election will affect the budget. Greg Johnson is cautiously optimistic in hoping that the corps could be awarded \$625,000.00.

Greg Johnson stated that the hydrology work was near completion upstream from the Big Horn River mouth and the hydraulic modeling is being done in Stillwater and Yellowstone counties. Flood plain mapping will be done soon thereafter.

Greg Johnson also said the ACOE hopes to spend \$90,000.00 on the 2nd year of the avian study this coming summer.

The Intake fish passage project was discussed and the Council suggested that Warren contact the appropriate fishery experts and have them attend the YRCDC January meeting. Vickie Marquis of the Missouri River Council will be invited. The Council is interested in the scientific rationale behind the project and will decide if they should support the fish passage project or remain neutral. Following this discussion, the fisheries scope of work may need to be re-visited to possibly supplement what's already been done at Intake. It was suggested that the RAC members be invited to the January meeting with mileage paid. The regular meeting will be held first, then the fisheries presentation. Legislators will also be invited.

Warren Kellogg said the 2007 riparian field work would be streamlined by using the PC Tablet that the Council has purchased. A database is being developed to allow this procedure to be more efficient. Warren asked for permission to proceed in procuring assistance in having this database developed. Jim Robinson commented that this would come under the GIS contract. Approval was given by consensus vote.

Laverne Ivie and Kelly Gilbertson discovered that inputting data in the 310 data base was very complicated. That is why there was a prototype county initiated to work out the bugs. Warren will bring the results of this project to the Yellowstone CD before bringing it to the Council in February.

Warren said that part of the government land surveys in the late 1800s included survey notes and that some of this information could be valuable. Warren requested that once Kelly Gilbertson completed the data base entries on the 310s that she would go to the BLM office at Billings and pull those survey notes out for a couple reaches. It could then be determined if it is worthwhile to

do this for the entire river. John Moorhouse said he could help her get started. If it seems worthwhile these notes could eventually be transcribed.

Grant applications were discussed next. Warren said the YRCDC currently has three grant applications in the works. The first one is the one for the Ortho Viewer that Jim Robinson submitted in August. It was for \$75,000.00 and we have not heard back on it yet. The next one was a pre-proposal that Laurie Kelly submitted to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation for \$20,000.00 in behalf of the Council. This was for weed demonstration projects in Rosebud and Sweet Grass County on Russian Olive trees and Salt Cedar. The last one was submitted by Dave Schwarz and Jim Robinson to the EPA targeted watershed program to finish up the topographic mapping in the remaining counties. This grant application is for \$230,000.00 and the results should be known early next year. Copies of the grant applications are available from Dave Schwarz.

Warren made a request to attend each of the conservation district's meetings over the next few months in order to speak with the individual CD Boards about the 2006 work that has been done and plans for 2007 field work. Warren will also have a list of contacts for the riparian work in each county. These contacts should be made early. The YRCDC may want to set up regional meetings with the landowners this spring to keep them in the loop.

John Moorhouse commented that we do need to update a display that can be taken up and down the river and be pertinent to the area involved.

Paul Gilbert wants a letter written to be included with Danielle Jones's letter concerning the avian studies. This letter would be sent to the local conservation districts to be put in their local newspapers.

Jim Robinson said that the NRIS contract had expired and he has drafted a new one that would continue to let us utilize NRIS services on an as needed basis to post the results of scientific work. This contract is for \$3,000.00 and will last a year and a half. Approval was granted by consensus vote.

A discussion was held on TAC membership. Dan Nebel will no longer serve on the TAC and a cold water fisheries biologist (Ken Frazer, FW&P) will be added. This action was approved by consensus vote of the Council. Warren also suggested adding a Council member and RAC member to the TAC. Burt Williams and Dave Schwarz were suggested as possible candidates and both agreed to serve. The Council approved this action. The next TAC meeting will be February 14th in Billings.

Yellowstone Clean up: Bob Hector reported on the clean up process that was done with the Montana Conservation Corp and requested permission to proceed with a plan to clean up fishing sites this coming summer. He said the Missouri River group may join in. The Council gave him permission to proceed and he will bring more information back to the January meeting.

RAC Update: John Moorhouse commented that there were vacancies on the RAC but he was hesitant to fill them until there was more for the RAC to do. At this time there are no projects for the RAC to work on. The RAC will be called on to help with best management practices when the time comes. There was discussion about inviting the RAC to the January meeting. The Council directed Carol to use the BBTU grant to pay for RAC/TAC expenses.

Coordinator Report: Dave Schwarz said that the information in his report had been covered by Warren's update. He did say that Jim Bauder, MSU would be doing comparative studies on irrigated land in Buffalo Rapids as to which farms were the more productive, those with EQIP contracts or those without.

Business Meeting: Treasurer's report was given by Carol Watts. The financial statement shows all the activity in the account since the last meeting and the grant statement shows where we are with the grants. The reports were approved with the correction noted and filed for audit. Carol requested that vouchers be turned in after the meeting and any one who was on tele-conference calls needs to add that stipend also.

Minutes of the October 19, 2006 meeting were reviewed. The minutes were approved as written by consensus vote.

Warren said he was not expecting to hold a TAC meeting in January 2007. The TAC will likely meet again in February 2007.

T&Y Fish Passage Project: Roger Muggli spoke about his experiences with living on the Yellowstone River, working as manager of the T&Y Canal Co, how incorporating fish passage and keeping fish out of the canal has become so important. The irrigation district has been working with several agencies and organizations to make this project fly. Following the YRCDC meeting, a tour was conducted at the T&Y fish diversion/passage site for those interested.

Public Comment: Mack Cole questioned whether the Council was involved in any Russian Olives studies and whether or not the Council would recommend them being on the invasive species list. This was tabled until the January meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 2:35 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Watts, CCCD Administrator

Yellowstone River Technical Advisory Committee

Meeting Notes

Billings, MT – 11/15/2006

Socioeconomic – Cultural Values Interviews

Susan Gilbertz gave a brief up-date. Her team has completed 313 interviews to-date. Park County interviews are done. There are 3 interviews yet to be completed with the Northern Cheyenne (total of 7 interviews with Native Americans). Susan will be working with her team to complete the reports over the next couple months.

Susan also reviewed her report “Yellowstone River Cultural Inventory—2006; Observations and Reflections from Field Team” regarding the recruitment process of finding people to interview. Susan will present these findings to the Council in early 2007.

Riparian

Warren will approach the YRCDC about assigning Kelly Gilbertson (as time permits) to assist in the compilation of Government Land Office (GLO) survey notes along the Yellowstone. We will compile and evaluate two counties worth of survey notes to see if it is worthwhile doing the remainder. The notes are currently housed at the Billings BLM office.

Hydrology/Hydraulics/Geomorphology

- Greg Johnson and Roger Kay (ACOE) gave an up-date on the hydrology/hydraulic modeling progress for Stillwater, Yellowstone, and Dawson counties. By Feb/Mar 2007, the hydraulic modeling and floodplain maps for Stillwater and Yellowstone counties should be completed. Dawson County will follow soon after. Modeling will delineate the 10, 50, 100, and 500 year flows. Roger followed with a PowerPoint presentation *Update on Yellowstone River Corridor Study Hydrology*.
- Jim Robinson handed out a summary of geomorphology data collection and analysis efforts to-date. Expenditures associated with these tasks total approximately 570K.
- Karin Boyd discussed the reason for revisiting the flow line datasets, especially in regards to the overflow and secondary channels. The original flow lines were digitized off aerial photography under different flow conditions making it difficult to make comparisons. Adjustments to the flow lines will allow better comparisons of channel change over time. Work Order #3 will be drafted and presented to the TAC and Council for review in early 2007.
- A new contract will be written to begin work on the Channel Migration Zone (CMZ) mapping in early 2007. There will some prototype reaches done early on to evaluate utility and make available for the MT Legislature.
- Work Order #2 (inundation modeling) is currently underway by DTM Consulting. Should have an initial product to look at by early 2007.

Information Management

Reviewed draft contract between Custer County CD and NRIS to continue their service in posting YRCDC's images, datasets, reports, etc. to the YRCDC website. Contract period will be Jan. 2007 to July 2008. This will be taken to the YRCDC on Nov. 16th for their review.

Public Outreach

Warren will approach the Council about getting some time on the individual CD agendas in Jan/Feb. 2007 to go over 2006 work accomplishments and to go over upcoming 2007 work. The Council will be encouraged to set up regional meetings early next spring to provide this same information to landowners and local residents. Each of the CDs will also be given a list of landowners in their counties that need to be contacted regarding the riparian field work scheduled for May 2007.

CES Funding

- Greg Johnson reviewed possible ACOE 2007 budget scenarios. The House is at 250K and the Senate Appr. Committee is at 1 Million. May not have a final budget until early next year. Will likely fund the 2nd year of the Avian Study (96K).
- Pending YRCDC Grant Applications
 - ◆ *Yellowstone River Historic Orthophoto Viewer* – EPA (\$75,350. request)
 - ◆ *Salt Cedar/Russian Olive Pilot Project* – National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (\$20,000. pre-proposal request)
 - ◆ *Yellowstone River Water Quality Protection through Proactive Flood Plain Management* – Lidar topographic mapping – EPA (\$331,000 request)

TAC Membership

Warren suggested that the following changes be made to the TAC membership:

- Remove Dan Nebel (has not attended a TAC meetings in nearly two years)
- Add RAC member (Burt Williams)
- Add YRCDC member (Dave Schwarz)
- Add cold water fishery biologist (Ken Frazer, FW&P)

The TAC concurred with these suggestions and they will be taken to the YRCDC for their approval.

Next Meeting/Agenda Items

The next TAC meeting will be scheduled for February 14th in Billings. Agenda items will include:

- Cultural Interviews Up-date
- ACOE Budget/2007 Work Plan
- Hydraulics Up-Date
- Geomorphology – Work Order #3
- Fisheries Scope of Work
- Riparian/Invasive Species/Wetland Scope of Work
- 310 Permit Web Application
- Public Outreach – 2007 Field Season